

# **Montgomery Co. ATC Student Accepted Into ECU Aviation Program Airplane Project and Mr. Ron Hill Provide Valuable High School Experience**

Montgomery Co. ATC Automotive Technology Student Leighane Hall has always loved aviation and wanted to fly; however, she never dreamed that she would have an opportunity to assist in building an airplane (from the ground up) during her high school career. But, she has. In fact, her love of aviation and the hands-on experience of building a plane under the watchful eye of Ron Hill, manager of the Mt. Sterling-Montgomery Co. Airport, helped solidify her decision to request admission into the Aviation Program at Eastern Kentucky University. She has been accepted.

Conceived by Montgomery Co. ATC Principal Mike Kindred and Automotive Technology Instructor Joe Mitchell, the building of an airplane began in 2004 as a KY Tech Prep project. Mr. Hill was enlisted and accepted the position of “technical advisor and counselor” for the entire Tech Prep project. Every inch of the two-seater super cub wide body airplane has been under his supervision.



**“We wanted a project that would generate interest and support, and at the same time incorporate the integration of academics and theory with applied technical learning,” says Kindred. “This airplane project surpassed our original goals. And, one of the most important outcomes has been that it made a difference in so many of our students. They have worked hard and learned how academic principles apply to a real world project; all while developing the technical skills necessary to build a plane. Along the way, they also learned something about a work ethic – because Ron Hill insisted on perfection – not only in their performance, but in showing up for class too. And, if the students didn’t have an appreciation for aviation, a good work ethic and perfection prior to this project – they do now.”**

**It was Mr. Kindred who initially made contact with Leighane’s mother and sisters to see if she knew about and wanted to be part of the Tech Prep project.**

**“I first learned Leighane wanted to fly during our High School Academic Showcase – and that it had been a life long dream of hers,” says Kindred. “So, I personally contacted her mother because I know and coached both of her sisters in basketball. At the time we were looking for students we thought would gain from this project. It was the right match.”**

**When Leighane learned about the “airplane project,” she was excited and instinctively knew this was something that would provide the wind beneath her wings and allow her to take flight and be able to soar – because it was something that she already had an interest in and wanted to pursue. During the process, she also learned a lot about how well students are treated at an area technology center.**

**“Leighane Hall is an outstanding example of what students can do given the right educational pathway,” says Kindred. “We are all proud of her decision to enter an aviation program.”**







A teaching moment – Mr. Mitchell and Leighane

**“After my first class at the ATC, I knew that the atmosphere was different. It’s kind of like we are all a big family and they will do anything they can to help all of us. They monitor our grades and progress just like my parents would,” says Leighane. “Mr. Mitchell has been my instructor for three years and the technical skills that I have learned will help me in my college career. It’s important to learn the basics of any career and he has provided me with the fundamentals to build my foundation in aviation. Mr. Mitchell has also taught me how to be responsible. He has always stressed to all of us to be punctual and**

**accountable for our actions. All of this is about developing a good work ethic and I believe this has filtered into the job I hold today.”**

**“From Leighane’s sophomore year, she has progressed from a shy, introverted individual to a much more outgoing young lady. She has been an outstanding student and always accepted every task placed before her. She loves a good challenge and competes furiously during class contests,” says Mitchell. “Once this Tech Prep project began, Leighane kind of came out of her shell and began progressing at an accelerated rate. I am convinced this is because we were building an airplane. She showed a great interest in everything we were doing. Now she is going on to pursue a career in an aviation program. I couldn’t be happier that she is taking the skills she has learned in my class and will now have an opportunity to apply them in the career of her choice. It’s exciting.”**

**“Mr. Mitchell has not only has he taught me technical skills, but I also think of him as a friend and advisor,” says Leighane. “Mr. Hill is just great! He is a perfectionist and supervised everything we have done. We had to be perfect.”**

**“By working with Mr. Hill, my students have had a chance to broaden their perception of what takes place at an airport and the similarities of auto and airplane mechanics. Mr. Hill has donated a lot of his time and money in working with my students on the airplane project. We feel that he has actually found a true calling in working with our students. They absolutely love and respect this man,” says Mitchell. “Ron is a perfectionist and he brings perfection to the table with regard to any task my students perform. Not only has he taught them the worth of doing something correctly, he has taught them how to be accountable. I have seen students change how they behave as a result of working with Mr. Hill. His patience is one of his greatest assets when it comes to working with teenage students and we are privileged that he has given so much time and effort to this Tech Prep project.”**



**Photo above (l to r): Montgomery Co. ATC Principal Mike Kindred; Automotive Technology Instructor Joe Mitchell; Leighane Hall and Mr. Ron Hill, manager of the the Mt. Sterling-Montgomery Co. Airport**

**Photo below (Under Hill’s watchful eye, Leighane puts finishing touches the plane’s letters.**





**“Ron has a heart of gold. In 23 years of teaching, coaching and being an administrator, I have seen many people provide services to education; however, Ron Hill has given of himself in terms of expertise, supplies, and spending three years of his time teaching students how to build a plane,” says Kindred. “In my opinion, the students who have worked on this project have learned technical skills as well as how important it is to be respectful, responsible and reliable. You can’t imagine how much of an impact this has had on our students.”**



**Leighane looks over the newly installed control panel**



**“The relationship that Ron has developed with all the kids is second to none. Many have benefited as a result of knowing him. He has given some students a job, helped others with a car, provided transportation for special events, bought food, and even flown them in his airplanes after school hours. This is a special bond that each kid will remember and cherish. For me, I value his friendship as much as anything.”**  
**Principal Mike Kindred**



**Photo at left: Mr. Mike Kindred and Leighane Hall.**  
**“Mr. Kindred has always been helpful. He provided me with guidance, recommendation letters and he has always been approachable. I appreciate everything that he has done for me.”**



**Photo at right: Leighane and Ron Hill.**  
**“Mr. Hill Has been great,” says Leighane. “I have learned so much from him. I can still hear him talking about perfection.”**



## Ron Hill – The Technical Advisor

**“We could have built a Ford, but we built a Cadillac.”**

Mr. Hill first met Leighane when the Tech Prep project started. In fact, he really wanted the airplane to be 100% complete by the time she graduated. Although the plane is almost done, there are still a few activities that need attention.

According to Ron, “kids enjoy doing this kind of hands-on stuff and I wish we had more time because we really have to plan projects according to class schedules.”

“Leighane helped put the floor boards in the plane, which was one of the first projects done when the frame was completed,” says Ron. “I’m proud of what she has accomplished on this project as well as being accepted into the aviation

program at EKU. I think this is an extension of what she is doing and I hope what she has learned here helps her in college. She has more technical knowledge of an airplane than the average flight students we have here because of her ‘hands-on’ experience.”



Ron Hill is a “hands on” technical advisor.



Dr. Ahmed Sabie, Mike Kindred and Ron Hill discuss Tech Prep project goals.





“We moved the plane to a hanger at the airport that has a paint booth and we painted one piece of the plane at a time until all the pieces were done. It was a difficult process because of temperature and humidity. But, we completed the process and the students did a great job.

We have eight coats of vinyl paint on every part of the plane. After the first four coats, it was sanded; then we added another four coats and re-sanded. Once this process was completed, we painted everything white using an Aero-Thane paint. There were three coats of this paint used on the plane. Once the painting was completed, we started the trimming process which required a lot of masking tape.”

Ron Hill



From this...



To this...

Good News Flash #207  
May 21, 2007